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Surgeon General’s Corner: Navy Medicine’s Role in Global Health Engagement

Filed under HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF, LEADERSHIP, U.S. NAVY (NO COMMENTS)

By Vice Adm. Matthew L. Nathan, U.S. Navy surgeon general, and chief, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery



Navy Medicine is truly a “Global force for good,” when it comes to its global health engagement initiatives. Whether we are providing medical care through one of our yearly humanitarian assistance efforts, partnering with local ministries of health and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or conducting disease research and surveillance at one of our labs around the world, we are making a significant impact on operational forces and global health worldwide, ensuring our national security.

December marks global health engagement month. This month we will highlight the

outstanding global health engagement work that our Navy Medicine personnel are conducting around the globe to provide world-class care, anytime, anywhere.

Navy Medicine’s strongest force for global health engagement are its three overseas infectious disease research and surveillance activities; the Naval Medical Research Unit Three (NAMRU-3), Cairo, Egypt, with a major field site in Accra, Ghana; Naval Medical Research Unit Six (NAMRU-6), Lima, Peru, with a field laboratory in Iquitos, Peru; and Naval Medical Research Unit Two (NAMRU-2/NMRC Asia), located in Singapore with a field site in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Our two labs in the United States, Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio and Naval Medical Research Unit Dayton, Ohio, also provide support to our overseas labs and conduct groundbreaking medical and environmental health research of their own. Our NAMRUs are all unique and invaluable forward deployed extensions of the Department of Defense’s (DoD) infectious disease research and public health preparedness network. They also play a key role in our national defense by addressing emerging and re-emerging infectious disease threats; evaluate new DoD sponsored drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics, and respond to combatant command interests.


Our labs around the globe conduct training with academic partners, NGOs, and subject matter experts. In fiscal year 2013 our overseas labs conducted 14,323 days-worth of laboratory, epidemiology and research ethics training to foreign national personnel.


This year, we saw the groundbreaking achievements in malaria vaccine research from Naval


Navy Medicine Video


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[Medical Research Center, Silver Spring, Md.](#), who worked with federal and industry partners to provide force health protection against malaria in advancing a promising new vaccine. As a result, operational forces and those around the world potentially affected by malaria will have a greater chance of being immunized from this disease.

Recently, the [U.S. Pacific Command](#) surgeon, Rear Adm. Colin Chinn, met with Presidential Malaria Initiative director, Rear Adm. Timothy Ziemer (ret.), to coordinate U.S. military involvement in a whole of government approach toward malaria elimination and drug resistance in Southeast Asia. In addition, Chinn is working with Dr. Alan Magill, malaria director of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to ensure partner nation military medical forces in Southeast Asia are integrate into the country malaria programs run by the Ministries of Health, sponsored by the World Health Organization and Global Fund. This is truly great work that demonstrates jointness to solve the malaria epidemic.

This year we also saw the outstanding and compassionate work that Navy Medicine personnel, NGOs, and forces from ten countries conducted onboard USS Pearl Harbor (LSD-52) during [Pacific Partnership 2013 \(PP13\)](#). PP13 went to Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands, providing humanitarian assistance and strengthened disaster response preparedness throughout the Indo-Asia Pacific region. The work that was done there is truly remarkable and life changing for those who received care and for those who went on the mission.

In terms of jointness, we also have two Navy Medicine officers who are assigned to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) in Geneva, Switzerland, and the WHO European Regional Office in Copenhagen, Denmark. Having these two officers at the WHO is a great example of our interoperability between Navy Medicine and the WHO in joining forces together for global health efforts.

Presence does matter in our global health engagement efforts. We are unique in that we don't need an address to operate when America dials 911. We can respond at a moment's notice and provide care anytime, anywhere.

I am proud of the work that you do each day either directly or indirectly to support Navy Medicine's global health engagement mission.



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